

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

April 9, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR ADMIRAL EPES

FROM: John Holdridge. NSC

SUBJECT: Suggested Statement on POWs

Attached is the proposed statement on POWs to be released in the President's name which we discussed at yesterday's Ad Hoc Group Meeting.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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Suggested Statement on Third Country Internment of Prisoners of War

I welcome the Republic of Vietnam's proposal, made yesterday in the Paris negotiations, for internment of prisoners of war in a neutral country. Although short of the release of prisoners of war which is our goal, this would be a reasonable and responsible way of alleviating the plight of prisoners of war on both sides. I hope the other side will respond to this initiative by agreeing to the early internment of our prisoners of war in a neutral country.

Third country internment of prisoners of war is specifically envisaged by the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention of 1949, by which both sides in the Indochina conflict are bound. There can be no constructive purpose in the continued long detention of prisoners of war. They and their families have suffered too much already. Agreement to intern prisoners of war in a third country would mean that the prisoners would no longer serve as hostages for political or military purposes.